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AUTHOR Subervi-Velez, Federico; And Others
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ABSTRACT

To determine to what extent Spanish-language daily newspapers in Miami (Florida) and Los Angeles (California) reported political news about the primaries from Hispanic angles, a study examined how these newspapers reported news about the issues and candidates during the 1988 presidential primaries. The specific time period examined was from January 1, 1988, a little more than one month prior to the first presidential caucus in Iowa, to August 20, the first Sunday after the last presidential convention, the Republican National Convention in New Orleans. A total of 610 stories were examined in a systematic content analysis of the news that appeared during the primary time frame. Findings showed that (1) more than a quarter of the presidential primary stories in each of the newspapers examined had a Hispanic angle; (2) regarding topics, there appeared to be a slight tendency toward stories dealing generally with the candidate or party platform and those dealing with general political news to address Hispanic concerns; and (3) the coverage followed the partisan policies of the newspapers. (Two tables of data are included, and 13 references are appended.) (MS)

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The Mass Media and Hispanic Politics During the 1988 Presidential Primaries

By

Federico Subervi-Velez, University of Texas, Austin

Michael B. Salwen

Jennie Haulser

&

Astrid Romero

University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL.

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THE MASS MEDIA AND HISPANIC POLITICS DURING THE 1988 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

This study examined how Spanish-language daily newspapers in Miami, Fla., and Los Angeles, Calif., reported news about the issues and candidates during the 1988 presidential primaries from Jan. 1, 1988, a little more than one month prior to the first presidential caucus in Iowa, to Aug. 20, the first Sunday after the last presidential convention, the Republican National Convention in New Orleans. The primary research question centered on what extent these newspapers reported political news about the primaries with Hispanic angles.

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This study reports a systematic content analysis of the stories that appeared during the primary time frame; however, it is just a small part of a much larger study which involves more media organizations (including television and radio), English-language media, more cities, and qualitative in-depth interviews with media gatekeepers and political campaign managers.

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Spanish-language newspapers are published for a selected audience with the goal of providing Spanish speakers in America with news (Nicolina, 1987).

But should the news in these newspapers be the same news that appears in English-language newspapers, only in Spanish? Or should the Spanish-language newspapers provide special "slants" or "angles" for Spanish speakers' interests.

Our interviews with Spanish-language media gatekeepers in Miami, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and San Antonio during and after the 1988 presidential campaign suggest that Spanish-language media subscribe to the latter notion of providing special Hispanic slants to the news for their special readers and viewers.

And there is nothing unusual about providing news with special angles for a special readership. This is a common practice in American journalism today.

For instance:

*** In Western Pennsylvania, media gatekeepers provide news with special orientations for an audience comprised of blue-collar factory workers: stories about factory closings and the coal industry.

*** Here in South Florida, the Miami Herald gives inordinate coverage to Central America and news about Cuba.

*** In Detroit, the the media give special attention to news about the auto industry and auto sales.

So providing a special angle or slant to the news to meet the special needs of a selected audience fits well in the framework of American journalism (Stevens & Garcia, 1980). What does not fit within the ascribed framework of American journalism, however, is taking sides on issues.

American journalism ascribes to the dogma of "objectivity," "neutrality," "impartiality," etc.

Whether objectivity is actually practiced -- an if so, to what extent -- is a matter of controversy (Schiller, 1979; Schudson, 1978; Van Poecke, 1988) which leads to interminable debates.

But a large body of empirical research on English-language media coverage of election campaigns does show general quantitative "balance" of Democratic and Republican coverage (cf., Subervi-Velez, 1988). While "balance," in terms of quantitative equality of coverage, does not in itself necessarily equate with objectivity, it does show an effort to provide equal coverage, and perhaps an attempt at objectivity.

In his study of Spanish-language newspaper coverage of the 1984 presidential election which served as a framework for this study, Subervi-Velez (1988) examined six Spanish-language newspapers in four major metropolitan areas with large Hispanic populations (Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Miami).

In this initial study, Subervi-Velez described the space and display of news about issues and candidates for the purpose of guidance for future researchers.

Aware that previous content analyses of English-language media coverage of elections of campaigns showed general "balance," Subervi-Velez investigated whether the Spanish-language media also reported a balanced view of the campaign -- They did not.

Subervi-Velez found that four newspapers were more partisan toward the Republicans in terms of number of articles: Diaro Las Americas and El Herald of Miami; Noticia del Mundo, a subsidiary of the the conservative Rev. Sun Myung Moon, of New York; and El Manana of Chicago.

La Prensa of New York and La Opinion of Los Angeles were more favorable toward the Democrats than the Republicans, but these two papers were closer to the traditional "balance" reported in the research of English-language newspaper coverage of electoral campaigns.

Subervi-Velez's 1984 campaign study dealt with direction of coverage. This study addressed the other problem in the research of Spanish-language media coverage of elections -- whether Hispanic angles were addressed? It also examined the direction question.

METHOD

Based on Subervi-Velez's study of the 1984 presidential campaign, we selected Spanish-language dailies in the most extremely liberal and conservative cities -- Miami and Los Angeles.

In Miami, we examined Diaro Las America and El Neuvo Herald. In 1987, El Herald changed its name to El Neuvo Herald.

With a circulation in excess of 100,000, El Neuvo Herald is the largest circulation Spanish-language daily newspaper in the mainland United States. In this age of newspaper financial woes, El Neuvo Herald is incredibly successful.

El Neuvo Herald is a Knight-Ridder newspaper, established in 1976 to deal with the English-language Miami Herald's "Hispanic panic" problem (Salwen, 1987; Rosentiel, 1987). The Miami Herald faced, and still faces, a serious image problem with Dade County's plurality Hispanic -- mostly Cuban -- population. Despite its generally moderate and evens conservative views, the Cuban community views the Miami Herald as liberal and unconcerned about the Cuban community. Many members of Miami's Cuban community derogatorily refer to the Herald as "Miami Pravda."

In 1987, El Herald broke is overt ties with the Miami Herald. It moved its offices out of the Miami Herald's building and into offices in the heart of Miami's Little Havana district on Calle Ocho (S.W. 8th Street). It also changed its name to El Neuvo Herald and took on a colorful USA Today format. El Herald maintained a separate staff from the Miami Herald and claimed to be editorially independent, even competing against the English-language Herald for "scoops."

Diaro Las Americas, established in 1953, is a family owned newspaper, still published by Horacio Aguirre, a Nicaraguan native. It publishes every day except Saturday and has a circulation of about 66,000 (Pasos, 1984).

La Opinion, of Los Angeles, is the nation's oldest and best established Spanish-language daily newspaper. With a circulation of about 70,000, La Opinion is a family owned newspaper founded in 1926 by Ignacio Lozano Jr., a Mexican native, who hoped that his paper would be a voice for the Mexican people in the United States.

One author described La Opinion as espousing "policies generally associated with the poor and the Democratic Party" (Subervi-Velez, 1988, p. 680).

All stories in each paper about the 1988 presidential were coded for:

1) Candidate or candidates, if any;

2) Topics, which included: The "horserace"; General candidate or party platform; General campaign activities; Personality Profiles, Primary Results; Other political news; and combination of topics:

A) Horserace: Stories having anything to do with candidates' electability (i.e., his place vis a vis the others in the race, results indicated by polls, opinions about who won or lost.

B) General Candidate/Party Platform: Candidate or party stands on public issues and matters of foreign policy (e.g., economic issues, social issues, crime, defense, arms talks and treaties, international relations, and so forth.

C) General Campaign Activities: Daily activities and events of

party or candidates (e.g., speaking at rallies, universities, and so forth; public appearances and someone speaking in place of or in favor of the candidate, including staff, media personality, community leaders, and so forth).

D) Personality Profile: Information regarding a candidate's beliefs, actions, statements, and so forth, to mean something positive/negative about the candidate's ability to lead; candidate's physical or mental health; family or business.

E) Primary Results: Statistical and other results of the primaries. Does not include opinions about who won or lost, just the results.

F) Other political news not related to a specific candidate.

G) Combination of any of the above factors.

3) And whether a Spanish angle was addressed. A liberal use of "Spanish angle" was used, defined as "any reference to Hispanic concerns whatsoever." We felt that an expansive definition was appropriate at this point. We are now in the stage or re-examining the stories for prominence of Hispanic concerns (i.e., primary or passing references).

FINDINGS

A total of 610 stories were found: 254 in La Opinion, 205 in El Neuvo Herald and 151 in Diaro Las Americas. All three papers devoted about the proportion of stories with Hispanic angles: 31.7% in El Neuvo Herald, 26.8% in La Opinion and 26.5% in Diaro Las America.

There were some differences regarding the Hispanic angles as a function of the topics:

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

El Neuvo Herald devoted a larger proportion of Hispanic-oriented stories dealing with general campaign activities (44.7%) than Diaro Las Americas (25%) and La Opinion (29.3%). Also, in sheer numbers, the Miami newspapers tended to report far fewer stories dealing with primary results (Diaro, n = 3; El Neuvo Herald, n = 6) than La Opinion (n = 23). For the most part, these primary results stories were treated as non-Hispanic stories.

Diaro Las Americas reported more personality profiles than the other papers (31.1%, compared to 16.1% in La Opinion and 14.1% in El Neuvo Herald). This tendency of Diaro Las Americas to be more likely than the other two newspapers to focus on personalities suggests that Spanish-language newspapers may differ among themselves in terms of hard news and soft news about the campaign. It also reflected the general feature orientation of Diaro Las Americas.

The results from all three newspapers suggest that when the topic of the general candidate or party platform on issues is addressed, then it is most likely that Hispanic angles will be addressed. In Diaro Las Americas, 43.8% of the general candidate/party platform stories addressed Hispanic angles (La Opinion, 40%; El Neuvo Herald, 35.5%).

In El Nuevo Herald, 44.7% of the stories dealing with general campaign activities addressed Hispanic angles. That large proportion of Hispanic stories dealing with general campaign activities did not hold for the other papers (La Opinion, 29.3%; Diaro Las Americas, 25%).

Table 2 presents the results of the coverage of three leading candidates during the primary campaign period by Hispanic and Non-Hispanic issues. In addition to George Bush and Michael S. Dukakis, who were nominated by their parties, Democratic contender Jesse Jackson was a serious contender. His unique populist style and his stated interest in the rights of minorities made him a major candidate. The results in Table 2 only pertain to stories dealing individually with these candidates. Stories dealing with other candidates and those that dealt with more than one candidate are not included.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

George Bush received more coverage than Dukakis or Jackson in all three newspapers. This was more likely to be the case in the Miami newspapers, where Bush received 46.5% of the coverage compared to Dukakis' 27.4% of the coverage in El Nuevo Herald and 50.8% of the coverage compared to 38.1% of the coverage for Dukakis in Diaro Las Americas. The difference between Bush's and Dukakis's coverage in the liberal La Opinion was less extreme: 38.9% compared to 32.8%.

Jackson received the least coverage among the three candidates in all three newspapers. Coverage of Jackson ranged

from 11.1% of the stories devoted exclusively to Bush, Dukakis or Jackson in the conservative Diaro Las Americas to 26% in El Nuevo Herald and 28.2% in the liberal La Opinion.

There was also a difference in the Hispanic/non-Hispanic portrayal of Jackson in Diaro Las Americas. Almost three-quarters of the stories devoted exclusively to Jackson in Diaro Las Americas dealt with Hispanic issues. Most commonly Jackson's past ties to Cuba and Fidel Castro were mentioned, a touchy issue among Miami's Cuban community. A caveat must be made, however, that this finding should not be overemphasized because it only dealt with seven stories.

There were more Hispanic stories about Dukakis than Bush in all three newspapers, but in all the newspapers the majority of Dukakis stories were non-Hispanic stories. In the case of the two Miami newspapers the difference in the Hispanic coverage between Bush and Dukakis was slight, about 5%. But in the liberal La Opinion there were more Hispanic stories about Dukakis than Hispanic stories about Bush. There were numerous reasons for this difference, including Dukakis' Central America policy and his ability to speak Spanish.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined whether Spanish-language newspapers serving a communities with large Hispanic populations address issues of Hispanic concerns during a presidential primary campaigns; and if so, to what extent and in what context (i.e., topics, candidates) are they presented?

Miami's two Spanish-language newspapers, El Neuvo Herald and Diaro Las Americas, were compared to La Opinion, of Los Angeles, which is widely regarded as among the best Spanish-language newspapers in the United States.

Past research has shown that Spanish-language newspapers may subscribe to a more partisan political tradition than the English-language press. Miami has a politically conservative Hispanic community, and its newspapers -- especially Diaro Las Americas -- tend to reflect those views. Los Angeles has a politically liberal Hispanic community, and La Opinion has tended to reflect those politically liberal views.

An obvious weakness of this paper is that no comparisons were made to Miami's English-language newspapers. Such data are now being gathered and comparisons will be made. Nevertheless, in absolute quantitative terms without comparative data, more than a quarter of the presidential primary stories in each of the newspapers had a Hispanic angle. In the case of El Nuevo Herald, which is printed by the English-language Miami Herald to specifically deal with Cuban community complaints about an alleged lack of concern about the Hispanic community, nearly one-third of the stories contained a Hispanic angle. The papers, therefore, cannot be justifiably accused of overlooking Hispanic concerns.

Regarding topics, there seemed to be a slight tendency for stories dealing generally with the candidate or party platform and those dealing with general political news to address Hispanic concerns than other stories.

But stories regarding the three major candidates to emerge from the presidential parties -- Bush, Dukakis, and Jackson -- tended to suggest differences in coverage, both by candidates and political orientations of cities and newspapers. The conservative Miami newspapers tended to report proportionately more Bush stories than the liberal La Opinion. And at least the conservative Diaro Las Americas carried fewer Jackson stories than El Nuevo Herald and La Opinion. The liberal La Opinion was more likely to report Dukakis stories with Hispanic angles than the two Miami newspapers. Thus, there is some evidence to suggest that the coverage followed the partisan policies of the newspapers.

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Table 1

STORY TOPICS AND HISPANIC AND NON-HISPANIC ISSUES

	El Nuevo Herald			Diaro Las Americas		
	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	n	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	n
a*.	18.6%	81.4%	59	16.1%	83.9%	31
b.	35.5	64.5	31	43.8	56.3	32
c.	44.7	55.3	47	25.0	75.0	24
d.	20.7	79.3	29	23.4	76.6	47
e.	0.0	100.0	6	33.3	66.7	3
f.	48.3	51.7	29	25.0	75.0	8
g.	50.0	50.0	4	16.7	83.3	6
	N= 65	N=140	N=205	N= 40	N=111	N=151

Chi-sq = 17.21 df = 6 p < .01 Chi-sq = 7.24 df = 6 p < NS

* See next page for topic codes

Table 1 Continued

La Opinion

	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic	n
a.	10.0%	90.0%	40
b.	40.0	60.0	50
c.	29.3	70.7	82
d.	17.1	82.9	41
e.	0.0	100.0	23
f.	70.6	29.4	17
g.	0.0	100.0	1
	N= 68	N=186	N=254

Chi-sq = 40.22 df = 6 p < .001

Topic Codes

a = Horserace

b = General candidate/party platform

c = General Campaign activities

d = Personality Profile

e = Primary results

f = Other political news

g = Combination

Table 2

CANDIDATE COVERAGE AND HISPANIC AND NON-HISPANIC ISSUES

	El Nuevo Herald		n	Diaro Las Americas		n
	Non-His	Hispanic		Non-His	Hispanic	
Dukakis	70.0%	30.0%	20	79.2%	20.8%	24
Bush	73.5	26.4	34	84.4	15.6	32
Jackson	78.9	21.1	19	28.6	71.4	7
			N= 73			N = 63
Chi-sq = .41 df=2 p= NS				Chi-sq = 9.40 df=2 p <.01		

	La Opinion		
	Non-His	Hispanic	n
Dukakis	58.1%	41.8%	43
Bush	76.5	23.5	51
Jackson	75.7	24.3	37
			N=131

chi-sq = 4.48 df=2 p= NS